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Black African Literature in English, 1982-86, by Bernth Lindfors

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spiritual base from which to challenge the extremes that denigrate it: the false romanticism of the Negritude philosophy, the blatant ethnography of the anthropologists, the specious universalism of Western criticism, the complaints of left-wing theorists. At the same time, his essays indicate a tension in his own life that exists between these traditional theological convictions and his deliberately modernistic and experimental art. The potential dualism may also help explain his qualified approval of those writers whose work borrows from the realm of reality rather than symbolism, such as Chinua Achebe.

Jeyifo suggests that these essays "provide a kind of meta-commentary, a second order critical and theoretical discourse on his works." True enough if the emphasis is on "second order," since these pages reflect Soyinka as philosopher as much as Soyinka as dramatist. He rarely comments directly upon his writing, but it is the ideas and speculations expounded here that have made his writing possible and determined its form and direction.

Soyinka's famous discussion of "Neo-Tarzanism" from *Transition* (1975) opens with a typical flourish: "Pretenders to the crown of Pontifex Maximus of African poetics must learn to mind the thorns." The warning might be more broadly applied. There are many prickles in these pages that will sting and stimulate the reader to both respect and irritation, but at the conclusion one cannot fail to be impressed by the brilliance and wisdom one encounters.

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Bernth Lindfors. *Black African Literature in English, 1982-1986.* London, Munich, New York: Hans Zell Publishers, 1989. xxviii+444 pp. Indexes. \$85.00. Cloth.

This title is essential for any reference collection in African studies, and it would also be a sound investment for individual researchers in African literature. Though it comes from a different publisher, it is Lindfors' third volume in his well-known enumerative bibliography of criticism on African literature, carrying on from his now standard *Black African Literature in English* (Gale, 1979), which covered the period 1936-76, and its first continuation, *Supplement to 'Black African Literature in English,' 1977-81* (Africana, 1985).

This third volume lists nearly 6,000 additional items, almost as many as the two previous volumes combined, and like its predecessors it gives very strong coverage to general books and essays on the issues, institutions, and contexts of modern African literature, while covering criticism of individual authors as well. There are, for instance, separate sections on language, popular literature, periodicals,

censorship, organizations, and literary conferences. Though this is not a fully annotated bibliography, informational annotations are added for entries where the topic would be unclear from the title alone.

There are four features that have put the *Black African Literature in English (BALE)* bibliographies far ahead of any imaginable rival. First, Lindfors covers an extraordinary range of commentary from African publications and non-English-language sources, not just from the beaten track of Anglo-American academic journals; the initial list of periodical sources includes well over 600 titles. On the authors I sampled, Lindfors gives anywhere from five to fifteen times as many items as the African literature section in the *Modern Language Association International Bibliography (MLAIB)*, the standard general serial in the field. Second, unlike *MLAIB*, *BALE* covers dissertations and theses from African universities. Third, Lindfors supplies scrupulous analytical cross-referencing, giving entries or cross-entries to even a few pages of discussion of a single author within a general book or biographical reference volume. Fourth, nearly all the entries have been checked firsthand against the original publication, a mammoth task given the variety of material that *BALE* includes; by my estimate over 98 percent of the entries have been successfully verified, and the few unverified ones are clearly asterisked.

This stage of *BALE* received federal support, through Fulbright and the National Endowment for the Humanities. It was money well spent. One can only hope that Lindfors, or others under his direction, will be funded regularly to update this unique reference tool, and that in due course *BALE* will be made available in cumulated form or as a single database.

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REFERENCE

Davis A. Bullwinkle, comp. *Women of Northern, Western, and Central Africa, Bibliography, 1976-1985*. African Special Bibliographic Series No. 10. Westport Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1989. xxvii+601 pp. Author Index. \$55.00. Cloth.

This book is the second of a three-volume set of bibliographies on women in Africa. It covers English-language works produced in the years encompassing the United Nations Decade for Women and Development. In an interesting eight-page introduction, the author examines the process and progress of the UN decade and its role in inspiring the book, but gives us little information on the book itself. Still, this is one of the best and most useful and comprehensive of the